CRAFTY KIDS
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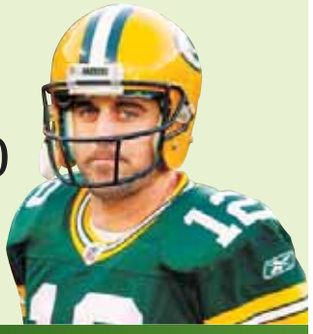
CHIEFS PUT END TO PACKERS' PERFECT SEASON {page 30}



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Kim Jong Il dead

People in streets of Pyongyang break into tears as they learn their 'Dear Leader' is gone

Kim Jong Il, the mercurial and enigmatic North Korean leader whose iron rule and nuclear ambitions dominated world security fears for more than a decade, has died. He was 69.

Kim's death 17 years after he inherited power from his father was announced Sunday by the state television from the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. The country's "Dear Leader" — reputed to have had a taste for cigars, cognac and gourmet cuisine — was believed to have had diabetes and heart disease.

North Korea has been grooming Kim's third son to take over power from his father in the impoverished nation that celebrates the ruling family with an intense cult of personality.

Kim's longtime pursuit of nuclear weapons and his military's repeated threats to South Korea and the U.S. have stoked fears that war might again break out or that North Korea might provide weapons of mass destruction to terrorist movements.

South Korea put its military on "high alert" and President Lee Myung-bak convened a national security council meeting after the news of Kim's death. The Korean peninsula remains technically in a state of war more than 50 years after the Cold War-era armed conflict ended in a ceasefire.

Kim is believed to have suffered a stroke in 2008, but he had appeared relatively vigorous in photos and video from recent trips to China and Russia and in numerous trips around the country carefully documented by state media.

Kim Jong Il inherited power after his father, revered North Korean founder Kim Il Sung, who died in 1994. He had been groomed for 20 years to lead the communist nation founded by his guerrilla fighter-turned-politician father and built according to the principle of "juche," or self-reliance.

In September 2010, Kim Jong Il unveiled his third son, the twenty-something Kim Jong Un, as his successor, putting him in high-ranking posts.

Even with a successor, there had been some fear among North Korean observers of a behind-the-scenes power struggle or nuclear instability upon the elder Kim's death. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GETTY IMAGES FILE

▶ North Korean leader Kim Jong Il waves to a crowd in 2000. The dictator has died at age 69.

"It is the biggest loss for the party ... and it is our people and nation's biggest sadness."
NORTH KOREAN ANCHORWOMAN IN A STATE BROADCAST

Local

Police seeking Santas

Pair of Kriss Kringles wanted after man was allegedly punched and knocked out outside bar {page 3}

Nibble on pocket pies

Put your leftover turkey to good use {page 26}

Spreading some cheer

Local charity donates 500 sleeping bags to homeless {page 4}

Sounds of the season

Metro reviews holiday releases from Gaga, Bublé and more {page 20}

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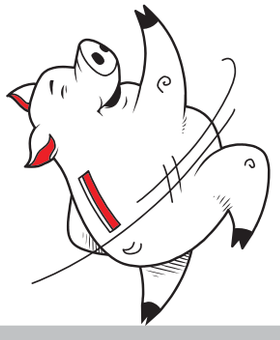

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Albertan charged with beating blind man

An Alberta man, who came to B.C. for a snowmobiling weekend, has been charged after he allegedly assaulted a blind man and left him bloodied and "unrecognizable" in a ditch.

The 55-year-old victim was found lying in a ditch in McBride, southeast of Prince George, on Dec. 11, after his cries for help from the bottom of the embankment were heard.

Cpl. Dan Moskaluk said a blood trail led investigators to a man in a vehicle that had crashed nearby. The man resisted, broke free and fled.

They later arrested Michael Allan Richter, 32, of Ponoka, Alta. Police say Richter and the victim had been in the car together when it crashed.

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS

Nurses fear the spread of sexual infections

Nurses in the B.C. Interior are warning the closure of five public-health clinics will hurt the poor.

The five clinics — in Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton, Grand Forks and Cranbrook — test and treat sexually transmitted infections and are set to close at the end of the month.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

DANIEL PALMER/FOR METRO

▶ The Rusty Gull pub in North Vancouver, where two men dressed as Santa Claus allegedly assaulted a patron.

Have a Merry Fistmas

Man allegedly knocked unconscious by Santas at North Vancouver pub ◗ Police looking for two jolly old elves ◗ So far, they have no leads

Two suspicious Santas gave a bar patron a lump of coal Friday night, knocking him out with a punch to the face, police say.

The men — thought by investigators to be in their late 20s to early 30s — aroused suspicion when they arrived around 11 p.m. at the Rusty Gull neighbourhood pub on the North Shore in questionable St. Nick attire.

"These were not the finest Santa suits," said a bartender, who asked not to be identified.

"Running shoes, one leg torn, tied at the back. It's the perfect robbery disguise this time of year," he said.

Margaux Seeley, a server at the pub, said she forced the Kriss Kringles to remove their beards.

"The law says you can't hide your face with a mask. So I pulled the beards down and just said, 'Now I know who you are.'"

Seeley said the men were inside the pub for less than five minutes, never ordering a drink and seemingly sober. When the Santas left, they had a confrontation with a recently evicted intoxicated patron on the street.

"I went outside and saw the guy on a stretcher," said Seeley. "He was knocked out. And he wasn't a small guy, either."

Police said they are having difficulty narrowing down suspects.

"When our officers arrived, the Santas had escaped in their sleigh," said North Vancouver RCMP Cpl. Richard De Jong.

The victim was released from hospital with minor injuries, said De Jong. Anyone with information on the swinging Santas is asked to contact North Vancouver RCMP.

DANIEL PALMER

1 news

Canada's transport regulator has ruled airlines must protect passengers who are allergic to cats, and that may mean Fluffy has to stay home. Scan code for story.

To scan 2D barcodes in Metro, download the free ScanLife app at 2dscan.com.

On the web at metronews.ca

Liberal Leader Bob Rae says the troubled First Nation reserve of Attawapiskat is 'our Third World.' Video at metronews.ca

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Group gives 500 sleeping bags to homeless

Donation part of the Lotus Light Charity Society's Winter Charity Drive
The society will give away a total of 1,000 sleeping bags this winter

STEPHANIE ORFORD
VANCOUVER@METRONEWS.CA

Hundreds of Downtown Eastside residents may benefit from a donation from the Lotus Light Charity Society and the Vancouver Police Department.

The Lotus Light Charity Society announced it would donating 500 sleeping bags to the VPD's homeless outreach program on Sunday.

The sleeping bags are a way for the VPD to reach out to the homeless, said Jodyne Keller, the VPD's homeless outreach co-ordinator, who was at the society's headquarters to accept the donation.

"The blanket is an item of trust. It builds that connection and relationship," she explained.

"There are so many people that are vulnerable and need support," Keller said. "When we connect with them, instead of saying, 'Hey get moving,' we say, 'Here's a blanket. Here's a list of shelters that are accessible for you. Let's move inside,'" she said.

An eager lineup formed on East Hastings outside the Lotus Light Charity Society even before the society officially announced the sleeping-bag giveaway.

To kick off the announcement Keller, Buddhist master Lian Tzi and Vancouver city councillors Kerry Jang and Tony Tang gave out 175 sleeping bags to the expectant queue.

"When the police are able to build relationships with our homeless population, they're more willing to listen and they're more willing to go inside," Jang said.

As the crowd dissipated, police officers opened box after box of the bags and loaded them into the trunks of their cruisers to give away over the cold night ahead.

STEPHANIE ORFORD/FOR METRO

▶ Vancouver Coun. Tony Tang hands out sleeping bags outside the Lotus Light Charity Society on Sunday.

'Tis the season for last-minute shoppers

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
@METRONEWS.CA

Robson Street stores were packed Sunday as shopping procrastinators scrambled to make purchases and cross people off their Christmas lists.

Sisters Allie, 21, and Billie Colton, 16, admitted they left their Christmas shopping down to the wire, but say they're confident that they'll make it in time.

"I left it really last-minute this year, so it's harder this time than what I normally do," Allie said, adding she still has six people to buy gifts for. "(But) I'll make it happen. You just have to."

The Colton sisters are not alone as a new CIBC poll conducted by Harris/Decima and released Friday reveals that 65 per cent of British Columbians say they don't have all of the items on their holiday shopping list just yet, and they've already spent an average of $433 on gifts so far this season.

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS/METRO

▶ Sisters Billie, left, and Allie Colton do their last-minute Christmas shopping on Sunday in Robson Street's shopping district.

So far, Allie said she's already made five trips to malls and stores and even sneaked in some buying during her lunch breaks since she works downtown.

She's also feeling the consequences of her actions, she added, as she's not the only one making a mad dash for presents.

"It's crazy busy," she said. "I hate going to the mall when it's this late in December. The lineups are definitely tiring to just be standing there waiting. It's nice to do and gets you in the spirit of Christmas, but sometimes you just want to get out of there."

Billie said she's only got two more people left on her list and she had an easy shopping experience because she already knew what she was getting.

"For (our) step mom, we got a purse, a shirt for dad, and a little something for my secret Santa at work," Billie said as she poked into her shopping bag, adding it's great having her sister help her out with decisions.

"I'd rather go with family than friends because they know more. They know the people that you're buying for, so it's easier."

School-board chair wants apology for critical video

The chair of Vancouver's School Board says two trustees should apologize for criticizing the board's anti-homophobia policies in videos produced by a group opposed to same-sex marriage. Two videos surfaced, raising questions about the conduct of trustees Ken Denike and Sophia Woo.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Human error blamed for submarine accident

A board of inquiry says a navy submarine ran aground off the West Coast of Vancouver Island this past June because of human error.

The board also ruled that inadequate training and experience aboard HMCS Corner Brook were contributing factors in the accident. THE CANADIAN PRESS

City to pay utility bills at Olympic Village

Vancouver has agreed to cover heat and hot-water costs for about 170 tenants living in social housing at the former Olympic Village for six more months. Tenants made a public plea for the city to pay the bills, which they claimed they didn't know would come on top of electricity costs.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Winning DJ takes crowd for a spin

Canadian DJ Hedspin outdoes 17 international rivals to win Redbull Thre3style World Final

Switzerland and Brazil place 2nd and 3rd behind Canada in five-day competition

TEXT AND PHOTOS: **DANIEL PALMER**

▶ Z-TRIP shows the crowd at the Commodore Ballroom how to rock Saturday night.

DJ Hedspin is officially the world's best party rocker.

The local DJ — a.k.a. Hedley Tuscano — beat out 17 others from around the globe to win the Redbull Thre3style World Final at Commodore Ballroom Saturday night.

Tuscano put on a heavily technical performance in a competition that gave each DJ 15 minutes to impress a judging panel, which included legendary DJs Premier and Pete Rock.

"It was a great crowd. I felt the hometown love, not just for me but for every single DJ. This whole week, Vancouver has been great," said Tuscano.

"These guys are the best in their country and they definitely brought it this week."

All of the performers were looking forward to enjoying the celebration after a competitive week, said Tuscano.

"We were all sharing the same stress, that pressure was on us. But now that it's finally over, we're going to get loose."

▶ The busy fingers of DJ NU-MARK.

▶ DJ Hedspin smiles after winning the Redbull Thre3style World Final. The Canadian DJ faced stiff competition from 17 international performers.

▶ The crowd reacts to DJ NU-MARK as he throws down heavy beats.

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Last convoy of U.S. troops exits Iraq

Nearly 4,500 Americans and more than 100,000 Iraqis died during the war U.S. spent $800 billion in Iraq

Outside it was pitch dark. The six American soldiers couldn't see much of the desert landscape streaming by outside the small windows of their armoured vehicle. They were hushed and exhausted from an all-night drive — part of the last convoy of U.S. troops to leave Iraq during the final moment of a nearly nine-year war.

As dawn broke Sunday, a small cluster of Iraqi soldiers along the highway waved goodbye to the departing American troops.

"My heart goes out to the Iraqis," said Warrant Officer John Jewell. "The innocent always pay the bill."

When they finally crossed the sand berm that separates Iraq from Kuwait, illuminated by floodlights and crisscrossed with barbed wire, the mood inside Jewell's vehicle was subdued. No cheers. No hugs. Mostly just relief.

His comrade, Sgt. Ashley Vorhees, mustered a bit more excitement. "I'm out of Iraq," she said. "It's all smooth sailing from here."

The war that began eight years and nine months ago cost nearly 4,500 American and well more than 100,000 Iraqi lives and $800 billion from the U.S. Treasury. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Iraqi reaction

- **"We are glad** to see the last U.S. soldier leaving the country today," said Said Hassan, 25, the owner of a money exchange shop in Baghdad. "It is an important day in Iraq's history, but the most important thing now is the future of Iraq," he added.
- **"The Americans** have left behind them a country that is falling apart and an Iraqi army and security forces that have a long way ahead to be able to defend the nation and the people."

A soldier celebrates as the final section of the last American military convoy to depart Iraq from the 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division crosses over the border into Kuwait Sunday. Around 500 troops ended their presence at Camp Adder, the last remaining American base, and departed in the final American military convoy out of Iraq.

Death toll unknown after oil platform capsizes

An oil drilling platform capsized and later sank amid fierce storms off Russia's east coast Sunday, plunging dozens of workers into the churning, icy waters. Four were confirmed dead and 49 were missing.

The Transportation Ministry said the Kolskaya platform started sinking after a strong wave broke some of its equipment and the portholes in the crew's dining room. One 5-metre wave washed away the platform's lifeboats, leaving the crew with no escape.

The Emergencies Ministry said in a statement Sunday 67 people had been aboard the platform as it was being towed about 200 kilometres off the coast of Sakhalin Island.

Fourteen people were rescued from the sea by the ship that had been towing the platform.

Further rescue efforts were being hampered by the severe weather conditions, officials said.

ARKTIKMORNEFTEGAZRAZVEDKA/HANDOUT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this photo, the oil drilling platform Kolskaya is seen in the Sea of Okhotsk.

A spokeswoman for the Emergency Ministry in the Far East, told the Associated Press that the rescue team had spotted four lifeless bodies in the water, but had not yet been able to retrieve them. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Oil platform

- **There were no immediate reports** of environmental damage, and that would be unlikely since the platform was not drilling for oil when it capsized and carried little fuel.
- **The Investigative Committee** Sunday opened a probe into the accident and said that a breach of safety regulations or weather may be to blame.

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Former Czech leader dies

Thousands of Czechs paid tribute to Vaclav Havel on Sunday, braving cold and snow at the spot where the leader of the peaceful anti-communist revolution rallied protesters.

Mourners, some of them too young to remember 1989's "Velvet Revolution," met at downtown Wenceslas Square, where Havel once spoke before hundreds of thousands of people expressing their outrage at the repressive communist regime.

They jangled their keys to make noise as anti-communist demonstrators did, sang the national anthem and observed a minute of silence for the playwright-turned politician, who died Sunday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PETR DAVID JOSEK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Vaclav Havel

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Death toll in Philippines to rise

Tropical storm leaves hundreds dead Winds, floods turn worst-hit cities into muddy wastelands

BULLIT MARQUEZ/AP PHOTO

▶ Residents retrieve usable items from their destroyed houses on Sunday after a flash flood in Cagayan De Oro city in southern Philippines.

As a storm that killed more than 650 in the southern Philippines raged outside the store where she works, Amor Limbago worriedly called home to check on her parents, but their cellphones just kept ringing and later went dead.

Limbago, 21, rushed home as soon as the flash floods receded and confirmed her worst fear: Her parents and seven other relatives were gone, swept away from their hut by the river. They had eagerly planned a small Christmas dinner in that hut just days earlier.

"I returned and saw that our house was completely gone," a weeping Limbago told The Associated Press from Cagayan de Oro city. "There was nothing but mud all over and knee-deep floodwaters."

Tropical Storm Washi blew away Sunday after devastating a wide swath of the mountainous region on Mindanao Island, which is unaccustomed to major storms.

It killed at least 652 people and left more than 900 others missing, the Philippine Red Cross officials said.

Most of the victims were asleep Friday night when flash floods cascaded down mountain slopes with logs and uprooted trees, swelling rivers.

The late-season tropical storm turned the worst-hit coastal cities of Cagayan de Oro and nearby Iligan into muddy wastelands filled with overturned cars and broken trees.

Most of the dead were children and women, Red Cross Secretary General Gwendolyn Pang said.

Although the disaster-prone Philippines is lashed by about 20 typhoons and storms annually, the extreme devastation and carnage shocked many, coming close to Christmas — the predominantly Roman Catholic nation's most-awaited time for family reunions.

Army officials in the south said they cancelled Christmas parties and would donate the food to homeless survivors.

Limbago said she and her mother, Jean, 50, and father Amancio, 63, planned to have a simple Christmas dinner of spaghetti.

Those plans had evaporated Sunday as she and surviving relatives checked crowded morgues, hospitals and evacuation centres for any sign of her missing parents.

Others lost homes and belongings but were happy to have survived.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Human toll

▶ **The government's Office of Civil Defence** placed the number of dead at 516, missing at 274 and rescued at 431 by press time on Sunday. Its head, Benito Ramos, said he expects the death toll to rise.

MIDEAST

Israel frees last batch of Hamas militants

Israel was wrapping up preparations to release 550 Palestinian prisoners late Sunday, in the second and final phase of a swap with Hamas militants that brought home an Israeli soldier after five years in captivity.

Under the Egyptian-brokered deal, Israel has agreed to exchange a total of 1,027 prisoners for Sgt. Gilad Schalit, who was captured by Gaza militants in June 2006.

Schalit returned home in October when Israel freed the first batch of 477 prisoners. Sunday's release will complete the swap.

The Oct. 18 return of Schalit, who appeared pale and thin but otherwise healthy, was the first public sighting of him since his capture,

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Man charged in N.Y. burning death

NYPD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ This surveillance photo shows the suspect with accelerant in his hand.

A man charged with dousing a woman in flammable liquid and tossing a Molotov cocktail on her in an elevator told police he set her on fire because he was angry that she owed him $2,000, authorities said yesterday.

Jerome Isaac was arrested yesterday on murder and arson charges in the death of 73-year-old Deloris Gillespie.

The 47-year-old Isaac reeked of gasoline when he entered a police station overnight and implicated himself in Gillespie's death, New York Police Department spokesman Paul Browne said.

Gillespie was ambushed in the elevator of her Brooklyn apartment building on Saturday afternoon, Browne said.

The suspect had been waiting for her when the elevator doors opened to the fifth floor of her building in Prospect Heights, police said.

"It was apparent he knew she was on the elevator," Browne said.

After setting Gillespie ablaze, Isaac went to his apartment building just blocks away and set a fire there, Browne said. He then hid on a roof before turning himself in to police, Browne said.

Isaac told police that Gillespie owed him $2,000 from some work he had done for her, Browne said.

The attack happened shortly after 4 p.m., lasted about a minute and was recorded by two video cameras, including one inside the small elevator.

Police released still images of the suspect Saturday night, showing him in a black jacket, wearing what appear to be surgical gloves and with a white dust mask perched atop his head like a pair of sunglasses. He is holding what appears to be a canister with a nozzle and spraying as he steps into the elevator.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russia. Protests

▶ A masked protester stands with a riot policeman on the right during a rally against alleged vote rigging, this weekend, in St.Petersburg, Russia. The sign reads: " My vote was stolen".

DMITRY LOVETSKY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Another post-election rally

About 7,000 protesters demanding a rerun of elections gathered Saturday in central St. Petersburg for a second weekend of protests against Russia's alleged fraud-tainted vote, a comparatively small crowd that underlined the challenge to the opposition of keeping up public pressure on authorities.

British lawmaker fired over Nazi party photo

A British Conservative lawmaker in Britain has been fired as a parliamentary aide for attending a friend's Nazi-themed stag party.

The party said yesterday that Aidan Burley had "behaved in a manner which is offensive and foolish" and had been removed as parliamentary private secretary to the transport minister.

The party says Prime Minister David Cameron has ordered an investigation into Burley's behaviour.

Last week a newspaper ran a picture showing Burley with a man dressed in an SS uniform at the party.

Burley said he felt "deep regret" about the event, at which guests toasted the Third Reich.

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Rae urges PM to visit Attawapiskat

Liberal leader says PM should take responsibility for problems on reserve

Liberal Leader Bob Rae is accusing the Conservatives and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of showing a "lack of respect" toward the troubled First Nations community of Attawapiskat.

On Saturday, as he wrapped up a visit to see the community's housing crisis first-hand, Rae chided Harper — who has long claimed to have a soft spot for northern Canada — for not travelling to the region himself.

"Where there are real people living, and living in really difficult conditions, the prime minister has nothing to say — he's not there," Rae said in a telephone interview.

"There's a great concern about the lack of respect that's been shown to people here."

"You show respect by coming, not by insisting that people come to see you."
LIBERAL LEADER BOB RAE

Rae's visit is the second for an opposition leader in as many weeks. NDP Leader Nycole Turmel visited Attawapiskat last month and promptly urged Harper to do the same.

Chief Theresa Spence has sought a court injunction to oust the third-party manager that was appointed to take over the band's financial affairs, who is being paid $1,300 a day from band funds. A ruling is expected this week.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

FRANK GUNN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

▶ Attawapiskat First Nation Chief Therese Spence, right, talks with Liberal Leader Bob Rae in Attawapiskat, Ont., on Saturday.

Pope makes emotional visit to Rome prison

Pope Benedict XVI made an emotional visit Sunday to Rome's main prison, meeting with detainees, denouncing prison overcrowding and calling for greater dignity for inmates everywhere.

Benedict spent over an hour at Rome's Rebibbia prison, fielding questions from a half-dozen inmates who spoke of their despair at being kept in overcrowded cells, away from their families, some of them ill with AIDS.

The 84-year-old pope told the 300 men and women gathered in the prison chapel that he loved them and prayed for them. He reminded them that Christ was imprisoned before being sentenced to "the most savage punishment" of all — death.

"Inmates are human beings who, despite their crimes, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity," he told them. "They need our concern."

Benedict decried Italy's overcrowded prisons and urged the government to overhaul the system.

Benedict said he hoped his visit to Rebibbia, which houses some 1,700 inmates, would not only give encouragement to the prisoners as Christmas nears, but would draw attention to their plight.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Orthodox Jews seek to segregate buses

Israel's political leaders and chief rabbis on Sunday condemned persistent efforts by ultra-Orthodox Jewish men to shunt Israeli women to the back of public buses, a year after the country's Supreme Court outlawed the practice.

The outcry came in reaction to an Israeli woman's experience of being asked to move to the back of a bus, which was posted on Facebook and became a cause celebre in the Israeli media on Sunday. The case even drew public comment from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who deplored gender segregation.

In Jerusalem, billboards depicting women have become a rarity because ultra-Orthodox vandals rip them down. The issue also has seeped into the military, where religious soldiers walked out of a military event several months ago because women were singing — which extremely devout Jews believe is contrary to Jewish law.

In the past, ultra-Orthodox Jews have confined their strict practices to their own neighbourhoods, alongside occasional attempts to pass restrictive legislation banning sale of pork or opening shops on the Jewish Sabbath.

Recently the extremist Jews have been trying to impose their norms outside their own enclaves, but the effects are scattered. Most of Israel's secular majority is not directly affected.

The Supreme Court was forced to wade into the controversy last year, when it ruled on the segregated buses and sidewalks. Although activists say harassment on buses has diminished since the court ruling late last year, some fiercely devout are persisting with their efforts to block the mixing of the sexes in public.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

10%
Ultra-Orthodox Jews, who make up about 10 per cent of Israel's population of 7.6 million, have become increasingly aggressive in their efforts to impose their norms in public spaces.

News in brief

DAVID GOLDMAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

▶ Prince Harry

Prince helps robbed pal

LONDON. Royal officials say Prince Harry showed up at a London police station to help a friend who had been mugged.

Harry's Clarence House office says the 27-year-old prince went to support a friend who was reporting a robbery.

British media say Thomas van Straubenzee was robbed in a south London street while on the phone with Harry, who raced across the city to help. When he could not find Van Straubenzee, Harry went to the local police station, where he gave a witness statement.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bids sought for $5M security study

OTTAWA. The Foreign Affairs department plans to spend up to $5 million next year for a sweeping intelligence study of potential threats to Canada's foreign embassies and missions.

The department is soliciting bids from security-intelligence firms to explain the possible threats to its diplomatic corps from terrorism, instability and natural disasters in 174 countries, including 46 major cities.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Feds' buildings in disrepair

OTTAWA. An analysis by The Canadian Press of the federal government's massive real-estate portfolio found thousands of buildings are in poor or even critical condition.

Among the buildings in rough shape are the Parliament buildings, the Canada Science and Technology Museum, and the taxman's headquarters.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

EUROZONE CRISIS

ECB exec explains exit

A top European Central Bank official has publicly discussed the reasons for his surprise resignation, saying he is not satisfied with the direction Europe's currency union has taken.

Juergen Stark said in an interview in Monday's edition of Germany's Wirtschaftswoche magazine that the ECB had done its job by keeping inflation under control across the eurozone, which it does through adjusting interest rates.

Stark is leaving at the end of the year, two and a half years before the end of his eight-year term on the bank's six-member executive board.

"There is a broad theme that serves as the reason for this: that I am not satisfied with the way this currency union has developed," Stark said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pilot strike cancels Iberia flights

Spanish airline Iberia cancelled a third of its flights Sunday because of a strike by pilots fearing job losses when company planes are diverted for use by Iberia's planned new budget carrier.

Iberia said it scrapped 91 flights, mostly domestic routes, but that no major disruptions were reported at its bustling Madrid hub or other airports because it managed to find alternative seats on other Iberia flights or with other carriers for about 80 per cent of the travellers.

Another one-day strike is planned for Dec. 29.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CNN star to testify at UK inquiry

CHRIS PIZZELLO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ CNN host Piers Morgan in Los Angeles last July.

Memoir said Morgan knew of phone hacking as long ago as 2001

The often colourful and sometimes controversial story of CNN star Piers Morgan's rise to the top will be revisited today when the former editor appears by videolink at a judge-led inquiry into the ethics and practices of Britain's scandal-tarred press.

Actors Hugh Grant and Sienna Miller, and Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling are among those who have given evidence about press abuse, while executives and lawyers for Murdoch's News Corp. have defended the newspaper.

Morgan shot to national prominence when he was picked by Murdoch to run the News of the World at age 28. Under his tenure, the tabloid exposed actor Hugh Grant's liaison with Hollywood prostitute Divine Brown and Princess Diana's late-night phone calls to married art dealer Oliver Hoare. It wasn't all down to good reporting: Morgan has acknowledged he kept his edge in part through bribes paid to informants on rival titles. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market moment

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	$1,597.70 US (+ 20.70 US)

U.S. online holiday sales up

U.S. online sales this holiday shopping season are up 15 per cent compared to last year, after what may have been the busiest week of the season, research firm comScore said on Sunday.

Shoppers have spent $30.9 billion online from Nov. 1 through Dec. 16, up from $26.9 billion at the same point last year, said the Reston, Va., company, which tracks web use.

Online sales surpassed $1 billion on four days last week. The five days that ended on Friday "will almost certainly be the heaviest week of the online holiday shopping season," said comScore chairman Gian Fulgoni.

HELEN H. RICHARDSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Megan Roney shops online at Europa Coffeehouse in Denver, Colo.

Online spending will begin to slow as Christmas draws closer, he said.

The holiday shopping season can make up to 40 per cent of retailers' annual revenue. The online sales data point to Americans' growing comfort with using their personal computers, tablets and smartphones to shop for the holidays.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

British banks to be restructured

The British government will restructure the country's banks by separating their retail activities from riskier investment banking operations, Business Secretary Vince Cable said Sunday.

Cable said the government will comply with the recommendations of an independent commission set up after the 2008 banking crisis and "proceed with the separation of the banks."

"We just cannot risk having a repetition of that financial catastrophe that we had three years ago," Cable told the BBC.

Treasury chief George Osborne is due to lay out the government's plans in Parliament on Monday. Cable told the BBC that the necessary legislation would be passed before the government's term ends in 2015.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE THIS HOLIDAY — DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE

URBAN COMPASS

PAUL SULLIVAN
METRO VANCOUVER

We still don't get it.

Lost in the noise after B.C.'s tough drunk-driving law was ruled unconstitutional, just in time for Christmas, is an astounding number.

Since the law was introduced in September 2010, more than 23,000 people were given immediate roadside suspensions for driving impaired.

You can argue that police should not have that power; that everyone should have their day in court; that breathalyzer readings may be faulty and should be backed up with a second reading. You can complain about the disproportionate cost to the offender — up to $5,000 — not to mention the potential loss of livelihood, especially for those who drive for a living.

And you could be right. In fact, as they say in courtroom dramas, I'll stipulate. It's time to fix the law and reset the balance so an entire generation doesn't go down under a giant DUI tsunami.

But before we give everyone a get-out-of-jail-free card, let's talk about that 23,000 number for a minute.

Not all of those people were like the human trainwreck who blew three times the legal limit and was charged for driving the wrong way on the Upper Levels. The law means nothing to someone in that kind of shape. But many of the 23,000 are doing everything they can to convince the courts they weren't impaired, that the breathalyzer registered a faulty reading, etc.

If they were so clear-headed at the time they got into their cars, what were they thinking? Were they gambling that they could slip through the CounterAttack roadblock? Maybe instead of calculating the possibility of getting caught, why didn't they pause to consider the simple truth that even being slightly impaired increases their chances of getting in an accident?

Of messing up everyone's holiday, big time.

Why this compulsion to drive impaired? It's not just a question for 23,000 drunks. It's for all of us who continue to text, put on that mascara, eat that breakfast sandwich, drink that hot coffee. That's driving impaired, too. And to the booze and the not-so-smart phones, add prescriptions drugs, non-prescription drugs, recreational drugs.

It's a miracle we don't all end up as roadkill.

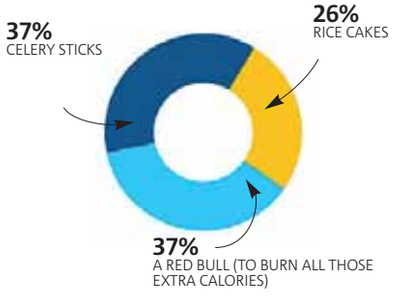
The toughest drunk-driving laws in the country managed to reduce deaths by 40 per cent; "only" 68 people died last year, below the average of 113.

It's that time of year when there are more parties, more drinks, more bad weather, more traffic. A dangerous Christmas punch. As the sugar plums dance in your head, try to remember that the greatest gift you can give your loved ones — and everyone else's loved ones — is to drive sober.

And Merry Christmas, pilgrim.

Metropolitan Panel
Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Since Santa obviously needs to lose a few pounds, what health-conscious snack should you leave him to eat?

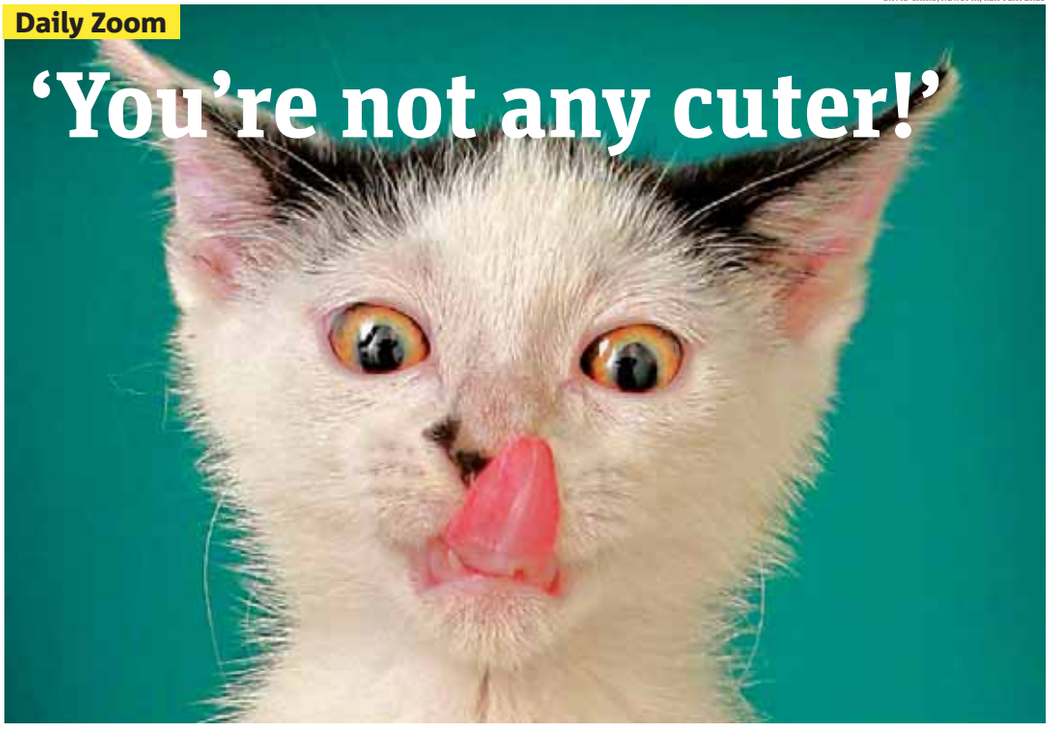


Local tweets

- **@solarflare7:** LAST show of Watch the Throne tour. it ends in Vancouver :)
- **@FreckledFaceJ:** I'm so tired of jay z and kanye west's voice. It's like everywhere I go someone is playing watch the throne. I can't take it anymore!!!
- **@CalliCatBC1:** Just saw a guy walking around this mall in Edmonton wearing a #BCLions shirt and a #Canucks hat. Nice.
- **@canucks_girl:** Time to get into the spirit of holidays and spend this day with the fam. (only because #Canucks aren't playing today)
- **@Cujo58:** Phaneuf should be suspended for exposing himself as Hansen blows by him like a tree stump. #Leafs #Canucks
- **@erin_ireland:** a euro police siren just wailed its way through #yaletown. have we switched over?
- **@gracecheung604:** I just might! RT @Phanyxx: Hitting #WatchTheThrone tonight? Come by @pivopub at 6pm for some craycray pre-concert tweet-up action.
- **@VancityBuzz:** Dear @TSN_Sports and @CBC, the #Leafs suck. That is all. Signed the rest of the country.

Daily Zoom

DAVID CAIRD/NEWSPIX/REX FEATURES



Cat must learn how to behave

AUSTRALIA. Don't tell this cheeky cat it's rude to stare and stick out its tongue: Poor Buzz is hearing-impaired. At cat obedience class at Prahran Vet Hospital in Melbourne, this 10-week-old kitten has to learn hand commands to know how to behave better. By the looks of it, he's still got his work cut out for him. METRO WORLD NEWS

"He's been dumped and is going to be harder to re-home, so I've had to teach him to pay attention to me. Already he can high-10 with both paws over his head."
DR. NICOLE HOSKIN, VETERINARIAN

'Give me a treat, then I'll obey'

TRAINING. Felines can be taught to do many of the same things that dogs can: Sit, stand and fetch things. The two species have to be trained in different ways, though. Dogs learn just to please their owners, but cats only pay attention for food rewards. "I find roast-chicken rewards work the best," Dr. Nicole Hoskin says. METRO WORLD NEWS

All bets off with 'psychic' feline

CATS IN NEWS. Buzz is not the only domesticated cat to make world headlines in recent days. One Italian feline by the moniker of FastidiousCat has been trending as the new Paul the Octopus after successfully predicting Serie A soccer powerhouse Udinese's last four fixtures.
METRO WORLD NEWS

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HANDOUT

▶ War Horse is the story of a horse named Joey, raised by a farm boy played by actor Jeremy Irvine.

Through a horse's eyes

War Horse recounts the experience of the First World War through the journey of a thoroughbred ◐ Emotional drama explores the themes of loyalty and survival

STEVE GOW
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA
METRO WORLD NEWS IN LONDON

Whether we're talking about the popular stage play or the book upon which it was based, when it comes to awards, War Horse has always been a front-runner. That is something Steven Spielberg may be counting on with his latest movie adaptation.

"Yes, it was a children's story to start but it has, at its heart, great pain and suffering," admitted the book's author Michael Murpurgo. "And that's not necessarily a very attractive prospect for a family show but (Spielberg's) pulled it off unbelievably."

The acclaimed film (which hits theatres Christmas Day) is definitely the stuff of award season. An emotional drama surveying the First World War through the eyes of an incredible thoroughbred, War Horse deals in themes of loyalty and survival during a war of attrition that star Emily Watson suggests makes one of Spielberg's most inspired films.

"The great achievement of the film is the perspective it puts on that war," said Watson. "Steven's other films have been about the Second World War, which has a very clear, moral imperative to it. But this war was utterly pointless and taking a horse through the journey of that war is a brilliant way of cutting a cross-section of it and seeing it first-hand and it's really powerful."

Almost as powerful as the story were the actual horses that played the title role. As honoured as he was to star in the Spielberg film, actor Tom Hiddleston insisted he was only upstaged by his animal co-stars.

"I was shamed at my artifice by their authenticity," said the Thor actor.

"That's really the thing I learned — just to turn up and be there because the horse will do something surprising, which will give you so much more than anything you might have preconceived in your own mind."

2 scene

Box office

Sherlock Holmes is facing his worst enemy: declining crowds at the box office. Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows debuted on top with a $40 million weekend. Overall business was down again. Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked opened at No. 2 with $23.5 million, about half the business the first two Chipmunks movies did on their debut weekends.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beach Boys announce a reunion tour, with Brian Wilson, to mark 50th anniversary

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Sorting out the naughty from the nice

This year's holiday releases are a mixed bag Michael Bublé flirts with Santa, a Stone Temple Pilot gets into reggae and jazz and Gaga wants a white snowman Read on as Metro helps you sort through the music

PAT HEALY
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA
METRO WORLD NEWS IN BOSTON

Michael Bublé, Christmas

Naughty: The biggest problem with this album is that once you hear it, you'll have to admit that you like Michael Bublé. But if the people you're telling have heard Christmas, then they'll go easy on you.
Nice: Bublé is silly, classy, and so right on-key. Plus, he re-imagines almost every song on this album. Sure, it's a little weird to hear Santa Baby as a vaguely homoerotic May/December come-on, but his torch song treatment of Mariah Carey's All I Want For Christmas Is You unearths a real longing that's missing in Mimi's version.

Glee: The Music, The Christmas Album Vol. 2

Naughty: This album is full of covers, sung with a self-seriousness that brings out the Grinch in us. In Do They Know It's Christmas, when the cast sings the "thank God it's them instead of you" line, we couldn't help but say that exact same thing — then we went and sought out the original version. They keep trying, but no Glee cover has surpassed an original.
Nice: Extraordinary Merry Christmas is like a snow man sugar cookie. It's sweet and you want more of it. But it would taste a lot better if Kelly Clarkson were serving it to us.

She & Him, A Very She & Him Christmas

Naughty: M. Ward's guitar playing is as beautiful as ever and Zooey Deschanel's voice is like the moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow, but it would be nice if there was at least one original track to spice up this 12-song collection. If you're not listening closely to them playing these standards, you might think you're listening to one really long song.
Nice: She & Him switch the she and him roles on Baby It's Cold Outside, so Zooey Deschanel is the one persuading M. Ward to stay just a little bit longer. This long overdue update makes the 1936 song about 50 per cent less date-rapey.

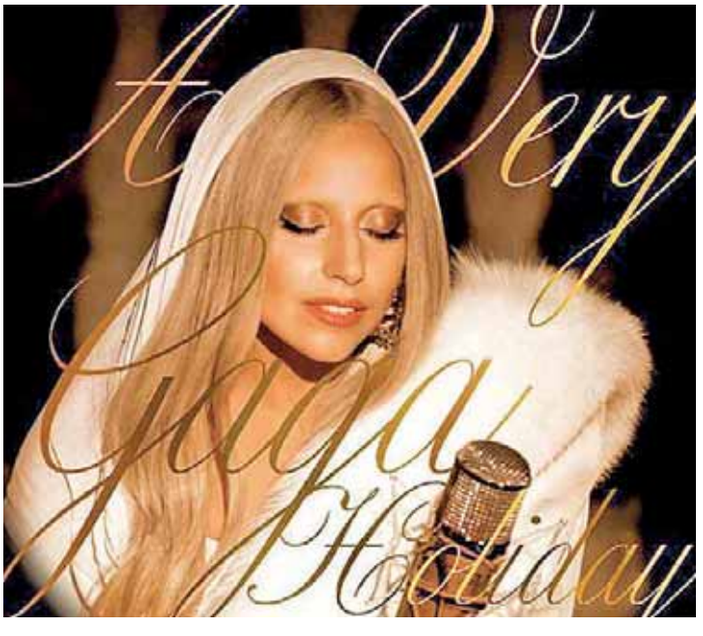
Eldridge Rodriguez, Christmas on the Allston-Brighton Line

Naughty: The major downfall of this three-song EP is that it's only a three-song EP.
Nice: The way that E.R. integrates pre-existing holiday lines into his originals is effortless. "I've got my records on, but all I play is Silent Night," he sings on Baby I'm Alone Tonight (Christmas Time). And though his narrator is certainly having a blue Christmas, there's a playfulness to the presentation, evident from the title of the song Christmas Eve (At Old Country Buffet).

Mariah Carey & John Legend, When Christmas Comes

Naughty: This song from Mariah's 2010 album, Merry Christmas II You, was rolled out as a single last month. With its department store horns and not-so-smooth R&B groove, the tune sounds like it was recorded for a made-for-basic-cable-television movie. There are little sleigh bells in the recording and the lyrics are cringe-worthy, with lines like "I can't wait to unwrap your love," mixed with a light "Jesus is the reason for the season" reference.

Nice: The album artwork is actually pretty cool, made to look like a well-worn record cover in the tradition of the Carpenters.



Lady Gaga, A Very Gaga Holiday

Naughty: This four-song EP, culled from her A Very Gaga Thanksgiving TV special, is only 25 per cent seasonal.
Nice: Only Mother Monster would have the audacity to add another verse to White Christmas. It's a stupid verse about her "dreaming of a white snowman," but it's kind of funny and her voice is right on.

Scott Weiland, The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Naughty: The first half of this album finds the Stone Temple Pilots singer sounding like a drunk who would be featured on the gag-reel of the American Idol auditions episodes.
Nice: As the album goes along, Weiland sobers up, finds his footing and dresses up standards like What Child Is This and O Holy Night in jazzy and island rhythms, respectively.

Rehearsal Carnage

Carnage star Christoph Waltz talks about the importance of actors having a 'safe space' to mess up

NED EHRBAR
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA
METRO WORLD NEWS IN HOLLYWOOD

Christoph Waltz is pretty clear on what he wants an audience to see: exactly what's on the screen, nothing more and nothing less. His latest film is Roman Polanski's Carnage, about two sets of parents (Waltz and Kate Winslet, and Jodie Foster and John C. Reilly) meeting to discuss their sons' scuffle, and while the project included two weeks of rehearsals, none of it was caught on tape. And that's exactly how Waltz likes it.

"It's rehearsal. If it was filmed, then it wouldn't be rehearsal," the Oscar-winning German actor says. "Why would you poke your nose in our rehearsals? Where do we then have our safe space where we try and make fools of ourselves just to fathom what it is we need to do? You need to have a safe space. If it's constantly invaded by outside observers — 'Let's have a press day on set because journalists love it' — well, that day is lost. Not to the journalists, fair enough. But for the movie, actually, it's lost."

Still, rehearsal sessions between the four actors and Polanski would make for an interesting DVD extra — something else Waltz is against. "If I had a say in these things, I would do away with all this behind-the-scenes, making-of rubbish. It's nobody's business," he says.

Carnage is the film adaptation of the play Yasmina Reza's "the God of Carnage," which has played Paris and London before moving to Broadway two years ago, with many notable actors taking on roles at different points, including Ralph Fiennes, James Gandolfini, Jeff Daniels and Jimmy Smits.

"I had seen the original, but long ago, and even though I was impressed with the actor who played the part that I play in the movie, I still have my points, because I'm sort of a cantankerous son of a bitch," Waltz says.

Waltz appreciates the chance to take on a role that's rough around the edges. "If I wanted to be very polite about it I'd say there is a tendency to reduce human characters to archetypes," he says. "I don't quite get it. I think the interest in humanity is waning a little bit."

HANDOUT

▶ Christoph Waltz's character in Carnage is a BlackBerry-obsessed lawyer.

Bad BlackBerry

▶ Christoph Waltz's sneering lawyer in Carnage quickly wears out his welcome with his fellow characters thanks to some truly obnoxious BlackBerry behaviour — interrupting people mid-sentence to take a call, for instance.

Naturally, playing such a role has made the actor more sensitive to proper cellphone etiquette. "The day before I came here, my flight was not booked — I didn't know what time to leave the next day, none of that. So they said, 'It's being arranged, we'll tell you,'" Waltz remembers.

"And I was invited to dinner, so I kept my phone on. Normally I would've turned it off. Every 10 minutes they told me what the current status was. Everybody at that dinner had seen the play, I think. And I said, 'I'm sorry, I need to know. It's terrible, but if I switch it off …'"

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Snoop schools Wiz Khalifa

Grammy-nominated rapper high on his successes in 2011 Next up? A project and mini tour with Snoop Dogg

G. VALENTINO BALL
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA
METRO WORLD NEWS IN NEW YORK

Wiz Khalifa is having a good 2011. This year saw the Pittsburgh native with a constant stream of achievements.

His single Black And Yellow hit No. 1, he has sold out tours and he finished up the year with two Grammy nods. Now he's teaming up with friend and mentor Snoop Dogg for Mac and Devin Go To High School, a new stoner comedy and joint album (heh heh) that will serve as the soundtrack.

While the film has no official release date, the album drops next Tuesday. To spread the word, Wiz and Snoop hit the road with a mini tour. Khalifa chatted with Metro about the project.

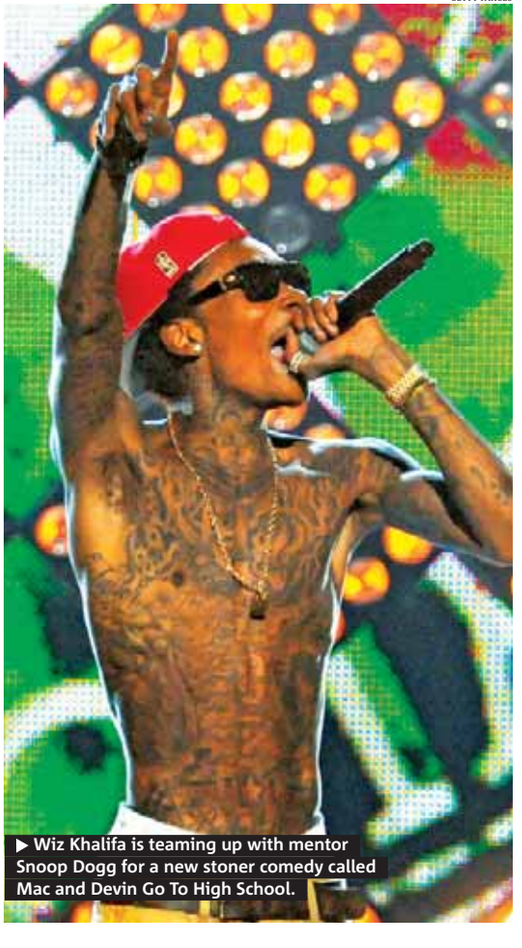
How was it to work on Mac and Devin with Snoop?
It's a dream come true to be able to work with Snoop. It just came together so naturally. It's like your O.G. just saying, "Yeah, you can come hang out with me." It worked for both of us. We're both inspired by each other. We wanted to do the movie and the soundtrack so that everyone else could have as much fun as we do.

With the serious tone that we have been seeing in the world lately, do you think there is room for that fun vibe?
Absolutely. At the end of the day, people want to be able to experience everything. You can't just wake up and be business all day. You can't be rock 'n' roll all day either. You have to slow it down and take it to different zones.

In the movie your character comes out of his shell. Does that mimic your real life?
Not really. [Laughs] I think the movie shows a different side of me though. The less braggadocious side. The calm me that I really was in high school. Not as nerdy or dorky.

"It's a dream come true to be able to work with Snoop. It just came together so naturally."
WIZ KHALIFA

GETTY IMAGES



▶ Wiz Khalifa is teaming up with mentor Snoop Dogg for a new stoner comedy called Mac and Devin Go To High School.

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The real story behind Spears' engagement

Couple celebrates with closest paparazzi, publicists

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

THE WORD

DOROTHY ROBINSON
SCENE@METRONEWS.CA

Thanks to giving up the reigns to her life to a court-appointed conservatorship (her father and a lawyer) and, well, I'm just guessing here, some big pharma mood-stabilizers, I believe Britney Spears is in a much happier and healthier head space than she's ever been.

It actually "seems" like things are back to normal for the star/robot. Which is why it's surprising to see her engagement to boyfriend and former agent Jason Trawick come across as the most orchestrated news item since Kim Kardashian's wedding.

After all, "normal" megawatt celebrities keep things like this private; only the ones with something to prove try to force it down our throats.

On Thursday, the two got engaged. And then they celebrated that engagement

▶ Jason Trawick and Britney Spears

— and Trawick's 40th birthday — in Las Vegas on Friday night. And, wouldn't you know it? An army of photographers and publicists were at the ready.

They followed them through each perfectly-crafted event — from the two of them checking in to Planet Hollywood, then having dinner at Sugar Factory American Brasserie, to dancing at the Chateau nightclub (notice all of that product placement? I'm sure they all paid a pretty penny for this). The whole night was completely packaged for our enjoyment. Sure, out of everything that Spears has been through, a formulated engagement is nothing.

It's just kind of sad that this living doll can't be a real person who celebrates real milestones authentically.

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A crafty Christmas

You don't have to take your kids to see Santa to get them into the Christmas spirit ◗ Include them in the preparations and let them get involved by helping create decorations for the house and making their own gifts and wrapping ◗ It's fun, cheap and creative

EMMA E. FORREST
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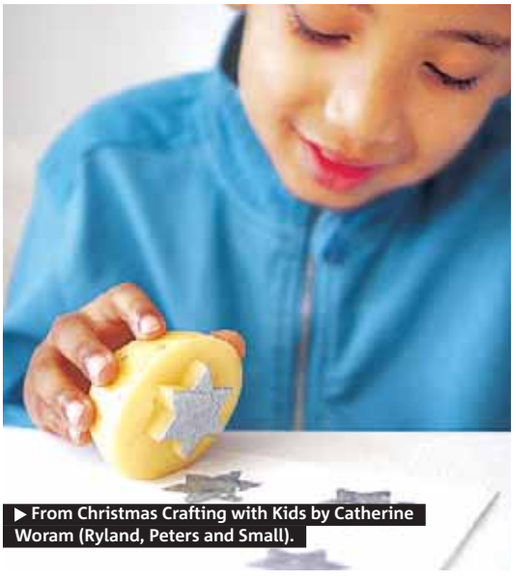
METRO WORLD NEWS

There are loads of good reasons for doing Christmas crafting: It's easy and cheap to make gifts and decorations from things you already have in the house, it's something fun to do when the weather's bad, and it keeps them out of the shops where they'd only nag you for the latest Harry Potter Lego set.

Christmas crafting is not just a practical way of whiling away cold winter afternoons, though. It offers a nice excuse for parents to spend quality time playing with their kids and creating festive rituals that bond the family together for years to come, from decorating the tree as a family to baking biscuits for grandma.

Create cards & wrapping paper. Potato printing



▶ From Christmas Crafting with Kids by Catherine Woram (Ryland, Peters and Small).

Greeting cards can be made with plain cardboard and a variety of stencils, felt shapes, stamps, pencils and glitter glue. It's even easier for your kids to make wrapping paper. And toddlers will love getting messy while printing the paper before wrapping gifts with it, especially if they get to completely unravel the sticky tape.

Ingredients:

- Medium-sized potato
- Star-shaped cookie cutter
- Chopping board
- Sharp knife (used by adult)
- Kitchen paper/dry cloth
- Paints
- Plain white paper

Preparation:

1. Cut the potato in half, making sure the surface of the potato is as flat as possible. Place the cookie cutter on a cutting board with the sharp edge facing upwards. Press the potato firmly down onto the cutter, leaving the cookie cutter standing proud of the cut surface of the potato by about 5mm, so you can cut round it.
2. Ask an adult to cut away the edges of the potato using a sharp knife. This needs to be done very carefully, to ensure the star shape is as clear as possible. Press the potato down onto a dry cloth or piece of kitchen paper to remove any excess moisture, which can make the paint watery.
3. Pour the paint into a saucer and use the end of the sponge paint roller to apply the paint to the star shape. Don't apply too much paint to the potato as this will make the design bleed. If you have applied too much paint, gently blot the potato on kitchen paper to remove the excess.
4. Begin printing. To ensure the design prints clearly, use a gentle rocking motion, moving the potato from side to side without lifting it from the paper. This will apply the paint evenly even if the cut surface of the potato is not flat. Continue to print the stars at evenly-spaced intervals. Allow the paint to dry completely.

Make festive gifts. Chocolate truffles

▶ From Christmas Cooking with Kids by Annie Rigg (Ryland, Peters and Small).

Easy homemade gifts include scented orange pomanders made by sticking cloves into an orange, potted indoor-flowering bulbs, all-spice biscuits and peppermint creams. Or try truffles – you'll have to help out but they're easy to make and your kids will enjoy rolling them in different coatings and boxing them up.

Ingredients:

- 50g unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 75g light brown soft sugar
- 150ml double cream
- 175g dark chocolate

Toppings:

- 150g milk or dark chocolate, chopped
- Chocolate sprinkles
- Cocoa powder
- Edible silver balls
- Chopped nuts (hazelnuts or flaked almonds)

Preparation:

1. Ask an adult to help you put the butter, sugar and cream in a saucepan over a low heat. Leave until it comes to the boil and the sugar has melted.
2. Break the chocolate into small pieces and tip into a heatproof bowl. Carefully pour the melted butter mixture over the chocolate and sir until the chocolate is melted, smooth and shiny. Leave to cool, then cover with clingfilm and chill in the fridge until it's firm.
3. Making one truffle at a time, scoop a teaspoonful of the chocolate mixture and roll quickly between your hands into a ball. Place on a baking tray lined with baking parchment.
4. For the toppings, ask an adult to help you put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of simmering water or in the microwave on a low setting. Stir very carefully until it has melted. Leave to cool slightly.
5. Sprinkle each of your chosen toppings (cocoa powder, chopped chocolate, sprinkles, edible silver balls, chopped nuts) onto a separate plate.
6. Scoop a teaspoonful of the melted chocolate into the palm of your hand and roll one truffle at a time into it to coat completely.
7. Roll in one of the toppings. Repeat with the remaining truffles and leave to set on the baking tray before serving or packing in a pretty box.

Lead warning

Health Canada is offering a reminder to shoppers who see children's jewelry on a wish list this holiday season.

It notes that high levels of lead and cadmium can be found in a wide variety of children's jewelry products sold in Canada, and kids can ingest harmful amounts of the metals if they chew, suck on or swallow the items.

The metals are toxic to children even at low levels of exposure.

There is minimal lead absorption through the skin, so merely wearing the jewelry doesn't present a serious risk to health.

Adult jewelry can also contain these metals and children should not be permitted to play with it or put it in their mouths.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Holiday festivities can cause sensory overload for people with dementia.

Holiday hazards revealed

Protect your kids against these eight potential dangers that are common during this festive time of the year

It may be a time of joy, but many familiar and prominent holiday staples could pose potential risks to the safety of children.

BC Children's Hospital and BC Ambulance Service are teaming up in their efforts to encourage parents and caregivers alike to help ensure the festive season is a safe one.

Between Dec. 23, 2010, and Jan. 5, 2011, BC Ambulance Service responded to 194 calls across the province involving patients ages 10 and under.

"With all the excitement of the holidays, some potential safety hazards can cause serious injury," said Dr. Shelina Babul, associate director and sports injury specialist at the BC Injury and Research Prevention Unit at BC Children's Hospital. THE CANADIAN PRESS

FLICKR: SCALESPEEDER

1
Toys

Choose items that match your child's age, skills and interest level. Small pieces – that can easily come off – and small batteries and magnets can cause choking and/or internal chemical burns. Toys with strings longer than 30 cm could strangle babies and toddlers.

FLICKR: KATERHA

2
Strings of electric lights

Strings of electric lights are hazardous as they are attractive to young children. They run the risk of being strangled, burned or electrocuted if they get wrapped up in the wires or put lights in their mouths.

FLICKR: L.C.NOTTAASEN

3
Candles

Even school-age kids are drawn to flames, so keep lighted candles well out of reach. Don't put lighted candles on a tablecloth or anywhere else that a child could pull down or knock over. Place menorahs on a high surface and not too close to the edge of a table.

FLICKR: STEVE P2008

4
Christmas tree location

Place your Christmas tree a good distance from any heat sources such as fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Cut a few centimetres off the trunk to expose fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help keep your tree from becoming a hazard.

FLICKR: HARVEYBEN

5
Visiting family and friends

The homes you visit may not be child-proofed. Each year, curious toddlers choke or get poisoned by exploring and getting their hands on items not meant for children such as pills, vitamins, cosmetics and cleaning products.

FLICKR: MRMEDIA

6
Fireplaces

A child's skin is four times thinner than an adult's and can burn four times faster. The glass of a gas fireplace heats up to 200 C (400 F) in just six minutes and takes 45 minutes to cool down. The pilot light of a gas fireplace may also heat the glass enough to cause a burn. Stay close to your child when in a room with a fireplace that is on or has recently been turned off. Block the fireplace with a hearth gate or screen that bolts into or around your fireplace, or put a safety gate in the doorway to the room with a fireplace.

FLICKR: MDID

7
Food

Children may be eating unfamiliar foods for the first time this holiday season. It's common to see more injuries in the emergency room as a result of children getting large pieces of nuts, carrots or apples stuck in their airways. Cut foods into small pieces and encourage children to sit quietly while eating, and to chew slowly. Children are less likely to choke if they chew food thoroughly before swallowing.

FLICKR: TERRYJOHNSTON

8
Tinsel, ornaments and gift wrap

While tinsel can make a tree sparkle, it's also a choking hazard for young children. Hang strands high and out of your child's reach. Also, place ornaments higher up on the tree as they can break easily and cause cuts or harm if swallowed. Be careful of holiday gift-wrapping like bags, paper, ribbons and bows. These items can strangle, suffocate or choke small children.

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Browse the stage show schedule at:
www.aaas.org/meetings/fsd

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Pockets of festive goodness

These Turkey Pocket Pies are a delicious way to truly get your appetizers looking like they belong in a Christmas season table spread

THE CANADIAN PRESS H/O

This recipe makes six servings and the pies can easily be decorated to make them festive.

If the dough of the pocket pies gets too warm during preparation, refrigerate it for 15 minutes.

Use leftover dough to cut out shapes to decorate the top of the pies. Brush the back of the dough shapes with egg wash to affix and bake as directed.

Ingredients:

- 2 frozen deep-dish pie shells
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) finely chopped leftover turkey
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) cranberry sauce
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) grated cheddar cheese
- Pepper, to taste
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) milk

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 200 C (400 F). Remove pie shells from freezer and let thaw at room temperature for 10 minutes.
2. Put pie shells onto clean, flat, floured work surface. If cracks appear in pastry, press and repair using moistened fingers. Cut out 6 shapes from each pie shell using a 7-by-10-cm (2 3/4-by-4-inch) cookie cutter. Set any leftover dough aside.
3. In bowl, combine turkey, cranberry sauce, cheese and pepper. Divide mix evenly among 6 cut-outs, mounding in centre and leaving a 5-mm (1/4-inch) border and top with remaining cut-outs. Gently press edges together and crimp with a fork. Brush tops lightly with milk and bake for 12 mins. or until pastry is golden. Let pies rest for 10 minutes before serving. THE CANADIAN PRESS/ TENDERFLAKE

Rose Reisman's Swap It

Veggie dips are a standard during the holiday party season. With a wide variety of flavours, some may seem healthy but be careful because names can be deceiving.

PRESIDENT'S CHOICE CLASSIC SPINACH DIP (4 TBSP)
280 CALORIES, 28 GM FAT

SPINACH IS CONSIDERED A HEALTHY VEGETABLE BUT WHEN USED IN A DIP WITH HIGH FAT MAYO OR SOUR CREAM, THE CALORIES AND FAT SKY ROCKET. FOUR TABLESPOONS ARE EQUAL IN FAT TO FIVE SLICES OF SMALL CHEESE PIZZA FROM PIZZA PIZZA.

SWAP IT!

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[FOR MORE, VISIT ROSEREISMAN.COM]

Be safe, be eco-conscious

Shovelling snow causes heart attacks every year And snow blowers aren't exactly friendly on the environment So, what to do?

BEN KNIGHT
LIFE@METRONEWS.CA

Shovelling snow is a pain in the back. The pushing, the lifting … the throwing.

Yes, a snow shovel is green and eco-friendly. It doesn't chew up power like electric or gas-powered snow blowers.

Local snowfall

Check it out Vancouver:

Snow According to The Weather Network, over the past 30 years it has snowed in Vancouver an average of just 10 days per year. The single-day record snowfall – 37 cm – fell on January 20, 1935.

But injuries are a real risk — and clearing snow can be fatal, as well.

The Canadian Heart & Stroke Foundation estimates that over 16,000 Canadians die of heart attacks every year.

The Huffington Post has reported snow shovelling accounts for less than half of one per cent of fatal coronaries, but that's around 50 Canadians — annually — who go out to clear their snow, and never come back.

Snow blowers are an obvious alternative. But they have an environmental impact — fossil fuel-powered ones especially.

"These blowers emit a ton of carbon emissions that pollute the air," notes Trish Smith, a popular blogger at greenopolis.com.

"(They) also use gasoline that can eventually wind up in our streams or in our soil, and that's no way treat our earth."

So is there a way to build a better shovel? There's a broad variety of ergonomic snow shovels on the market. Some have bent handles designed to ease the strain of lifting.

Others use wide blades and conjoined double handles to distribute and minimize physical stress.

And then there's the Sno Wovel — wovel.com — an innovative invention that combines a traditional shovel with a wheel.

"It's not only more efficient — there's a three-quarters reduction in exertion — but this takes the real pain out of shovelling, greatly reducing exertion and the risk of injury," says Mark Noonan, president of Nootools, who's been making and marketing Sno Wovels for the past six years.

The Sno Wovel

Traditional shovels focus most of the physical force of lifting and throwing snow on the small of your back. Adding a wheel moves the fulcrum away from the spine and onto the axle, cutting down on jarring and twisting.

"The shovel blade is actually angled at 45 degrees," Noonan adds. "That helps you throw more forward."

Shovelling snow is one of those rare cases where the greener solution can be significantly more dangerous than the power-burning alternatives.

Perhaps the best solution is to carefully consider all the alternatives — and always remember to be careful.

AARON LYNETT/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Make your life easier when shovelling snow this winter.

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Join us on December 25th for a traditional Christmas dinner with all the fixings, $29.95.
Seatings at 4pm and 7pm.
Reservations recommended.
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Holiday Inn

ADVERTORIAL

67 Ways to Lighten up the Holiday Season

40. Dress up the family CAT or DOG.
41. Match your TREE ORNAMENTS to your FAVOURITE HOCKEY TEAM'S colours.
42. Go to YUK YUK'S and laugh your jingle bells off.
43. SURPRISE your neighbours by SHOVELING their driveways while they're asleep.
44. Try Curling. NO, SERIOUSLY, it's actually FUN.
45. PLAY A GAME OF "Name that Carol." How about giving the WINNER a Molson Canadian 67?
46. TRY MODERATION. 35% of Metro readers keep FIT over the holidays by balancing out their eating with regular exercise.**
47. Keep up your ACTIVE LIFESTYLE. Another 35% of people KEEP FIT JUST BY KEEPING BUSY.**
48. Enjoy some EXTRA DAYS OFF work by celebrating multiple holidays.

Follow the rest of our list in upcoming issues.

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Must be legal drinking age. *Calculations based on average serving (6 oz glass of wine and single serving of mixed drink). Details at molsoncanadian67.ca
**Source: Metropolitan Panel. 462 English, 154 French respondents. December 2011.

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Building a new life from the ground up

A holiday season spent in jail led to a true turning point for this now successful construction foreman, who is helping others get on the right track

TURNING POINT

TERESA KRUZE
LIFE@METRONEWS.CA

Four years ago, Tony Kokol sat in a Federal Penitentiary having Christmas dinner with his Mom and Dad.

A life of recreational drug use had spun into addiction and some bad life choices put him behind bars.

"It got to the point where I lost everything; my career, my health, credit and relationship. I realized, 'Oh my God, I've hit bottom.'"

TONY KOKOL, FOREMAN AND SOON-TO-BE ADDICTIONS COUNSELLOR

"It got to the point where I lost everything; my career, health, credit and relationship. I realized, 'Oh my God, I've hit bottom.'"

Fresh Start Recovery Centre in Calgary proved to be a turning point in Tony's life.

He cleaned up, got into the construction business and worked his way up to foreman on Fresh Start's new facility. Now with the new building on the verge of being completed, Tony is training to become an addictions counsellor.

"My life is full and great. I'm blessed to be surrounded by people who have my back.

Every time I walk through our new building it validates the journey that I'm on."

Tony recently went out for lunch with his Mom. As she reached out to hug her son he realized how far he had come since that Christmas in jail four years ago.

"I put a smile on my mother's heart."

▶ Tony Kokol is currently working on constructing the Fresh Start Recovery Centre building in Calgary.

Recovery toolbox - Finding help near you

- Fresh Start Recovery Centre **403 387-6266**
- Turning Point Detox Centre **1 877 523-8369**
- Alcoholics Anonymous - **aa.org**
- Narcotics Anonymous - **na.org**
- Living Clean, Living Well
  Sunday nights at 11:30p.m.
  CTS-TV Bell ExpressVu 651
  Shaw Direct 351

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Is it home(work)for the holidays this year?

Celebrating the season sans family is a reality that many students across the country will face this year Not all of them are sad about it

Amongst the frantic last-minute trips to the mall and the consumption of Advent chocolate and eggnog, it's easy to forget one of the joys of the holidays: spending time with family.

Yet, for many across the country, namely students who study out of province or even out of country, being home for the holidays isn't an option.

Spiked airline costs and limited downtime are a few of the reasons some generation Yers are forgoing Christmas reunions to become holiday orphans. And for others, like Andrea Nunes of Vancouver, spending this time of year with the family is about as enticing as standing in a long lineup at the post office.

▶ When times get tough, the tough sometimes have to stay put.

"I have sentimental feelings about Christmas itself but they're not really about my family," said the Emily Carr University office assistant. "My family against the backdrop of Christmas can't help but bring up all these seething, burning resentments from Christmases pasts."

After her grandmother passed away when Nunes was a teenager, things in her family "broke down" to the point that her mother cancelled Christmas one year.

It's since become a mutual agreement among all family members not to celebrate together, which she thinks is "pretty great."

Nunes still acknowledges the holiday, and usually uses the time to bake. She also makes a point of calling her family members on Christmas Day.

"It doesn't make me feel sad, it makes me feel relieved," she said.

For Meelashini Auaduer, a third-year commerce student at Dalhousie University in Halifax, travelling to her home country of Malaysia during the holidays isn't a logical decision.

"Taking the two weeks to go back halfway across the world wouldn't really make sense," said the 21-year-old.

The fact that her family doesn't celebrate Christmas "softens the blow." Instead, she feels those pangs of sadness during the end of October, when her family celebrates Deepavali, the festival of lights.

Still, Auaduer insists she never feels alone during the holidays, and spends them travelling to Montreal or Toronto, or having a potluck with other Malaysian friends.

"If you don't think about (being away from your family) you don't get sad," she said. "So I don't think about it."

And yet many foreign students still manage to come together over the holidays. Moses Richu, a third-year University of British Columbia student from Kenya, said celebrating Christmas away encourages you to develop new traditions and customs with people from different parts of the world.

"You get 10, 20 guys together and you start explaining how it works and you learn so much from each other," he said. "It's like a huge room full of culture." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Deck the halls

Some universities actively make an effort to accommodate their students who don't have anywhere to go over the holidays.

For the past 12 years, Concordia University in Montreal has hosted a dinner soirée. The school invites all of its 4,700 foreign students, and the first 300 to respond are treated to a three-course meal.

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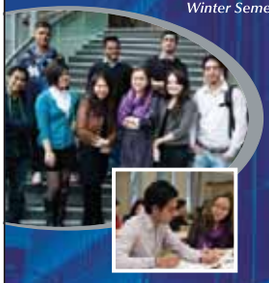
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Canucks preview

Minnesota at Vancouver, 7 p.m.
TV: Sportsnet

The Canucks (19-11-2) are five points behind Minnesota (20-8-5) for the Northwest Division lead.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Packers denied perfection

Green Bay's 19-game win streak ended by Chiefs ◆ Winning Super Bowl is real goal: Coach

19	14
CHIEFS	PACKERS

WESLEY HITT/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Packers QB Aaron Rodgers is sacked by Kansas City's Tamba Hall.

Mike McCarthy never put a whole lot of stock in a perfect season, except as a means of gaining home-field advantage and setting the Green Bay Packers up for another Super Bowl run.

Well, they still have a chance to earn home-field advantage.

The perfect season? That's history.

Kyle Orton threw for 299 yards to outduel Aaron Rodgers, and the Kansas City Chiefs rallied behind interim coach Romeo Crennel for a shocking 19-14 victory on Sunday that ended the Packers' 19-game winning streak. It was their first loss since Dec. 19, 2010, at New England.

"I personally always viewed the undefeated season as, really, just gravy," McCarthy said. "The goal was to get home-field advantage and win the Super Bowl. That's what we discussed.

"We were fortunate enough to be in the position to possibly achieve the undefeated season," he added, "but we still have the primary goal in front of us, and that's to get home-field advantage."

Green Bay, playing without leading receiver Greg Jennings and top rusher James Starks because of injuries, can wrap up the No. 1 seed in their final two games against Chicago and Detroit.

But the Packers no longer have the pressure of becoming the second team in NFL history to win a Super Bowl with a perfect record, or extending the second-longest winning streak in league history.

"I think our ultimate goal is to win a Super Bowl. The next step is getting that No. 1 seed in the playoffs," Rodgers said. "We've got a home playoff game — we've got a bye secured."

Rodgers was 17 of 35 for 235 yards and a touchdown, and he also scampered eight yards for another touchdown with 2:12 left in the game. But the Packers (13-1) were unable to recover the onside kick, and Kansas City picked up a couple of first downs to secure the victory. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Colts win

The Indianapolis Colts finally won without Peyton Manning. It just took 14 games and three quarterbacks to get there.

- Dan Orlovsky threw one touchdown pass, a key block on an 80-yard TD run and the Colts defence held Chris Johnson to 55 yards rushing, to beat Tennessee 27-13 and avoid becoming the second 0-16 team in league history.
- For the Titans (7-7), the loss was a devastating blow to their playoff hopes. Had the Titans closed out the season with three wins, they likely would have reached the post-season. Now they'll probably need help from other teams just to get in.

Patriots slow down Tebow in win

41	23
PATRIOTS	BRONCOS

Not this time, Tim Tebow. Tom Brady and the New England Patriots shut down Tebow's late-game heroics and clinched a playoff berth with a 41-23 victory over the Denver Broncos on Sunday.

The Patriots (11-3) won their sixth straight game and another AFC East title by bouncing back from an early 17-6 deficit and an awful first quarter in which they were outgained on the ground 167 yards to four.

This time, there was no last-minute magic from Tebow, who had guided the Broncos (8-6) to four straight fourth-quarter comebacks and six straight wins.

Instead of another slow start followed by a fantastic finish, the Broncos started out fast and then fizzled. They scored on their first three possessions and then were done in by a trio of second-quarter turnovers.

Champ Bailey had said the Broncos needed a big game against a big QB to prove to themselves and others that they were not just a curiosity but a contender.

They didn't get it on this day.

Denver has faced four quarterbacks currently ranked in the top 10 in yards passing — Aaron Rodgers, Matthew Stafford, Philip Rivers (twice) and Brady. They're 1-4 in those games.

Brady, who was 23 of 34 for 320 yards with two TD passes and a touchdown run, made up for another bad day by the Patriots defence to beat the Broncos for the second time in eight career starts — the only team with a winning record against the three-time Super Bowl champion.

With its first loss since Oct. 30, the AFC West-leading Broncos face a tougher path to the playoffs, with a trip to Buffalo next week followed by a season finale against Kansas City, which ended Green Bay's 19-game winning streak Sunday behind Kyle Orton, the player Tebow replaced in Denver.

Tebow fell to 7-2 as Denver's starter. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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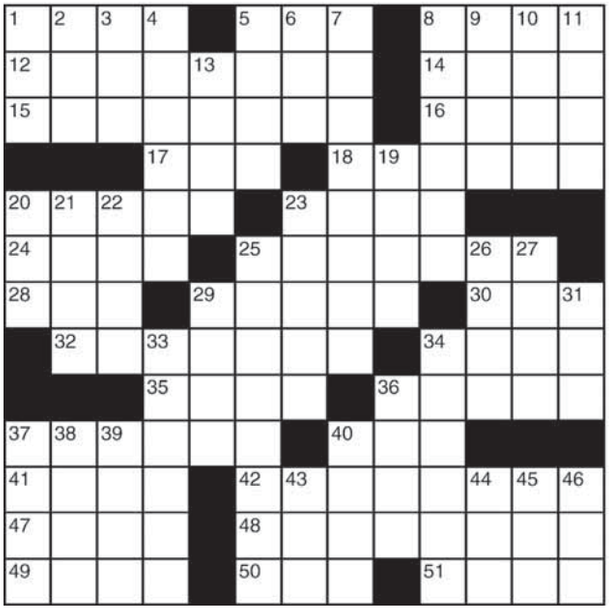
Crossword



Across

1 Bakery buys
5 Youngster
8 Treaty
12 Australian city
14 Reverberate
15 Like spreadsheets, e.g.
16 Slender
17 Scepter
18 Each
20 Hybrid eating utensil
23 Entanglement
24 Bohemian
25 Refrigerator decorations
28 Humour
29 Gave a darn
30 Regret
32 Grieved
34 Intentions
35 Primary
36 Sag
37 "— & Louise"
40 To and —
41 Emanation
42 Ivy League university
47 List of options
48 Catholic prayer
49 "Hey, you!"
50 Remiss
51 Je ne — quoi

Down

1 Atl. counterpart
2 Altar affirmative
3 Conger or moray
4 Wet cement mixture
5 Sort
6 Mrs. McKinley
7 Mad
8 Small
9 Liniment target
10 Stylish
11 Color quality
13 Beyond control
19 Frogs' hangout
20 Witnessed
21 Proper partner?
22 "Beetle Bailey" dog
23 Carpenter or Black
25 Crazed
26 Threesome
27 Japanese wrestling
29 Study all night
31 Kreskin's claim
33 Diacritical mark
34 Scents
36 Snare or tom-tom
37 Pack down tightly
38 Shades
39 Sea eagles
40 Show off your muscles
43 Eggs
44 Lingerie item
45 Midafternoon, on a sundial
46 Some small batteries

▶ Friday's answer

B	I	G			C	O	L	D		F	L	E	W
A	D	O			U	V	E	A		A	U	R	A
G	O	L	D	R	U	S	H		S	T	I	R	
			D	O	R	M			S	T	E	E	D
O	H	B	O	Y		M	A	K	E				
P	E	E	R			M	A	L	I	N	G	E	R
E	R	R			C	O	L	O	N		O	W	E
D	E	G	A	U	L	L	E			S	L	E	D
			U	K	E	S			P	E	D	R	O
S	T	A	T	E				B	E	E	F		
L	I	E	U			G	O	L	D	M	I	N	E
A	T	O	M			A	R	E	A		S	O	N
B	O	N	N			Y	A	W	L		H	R	S

For today's crossword answers and for expanded horoscopes, go to metronews.ca

Sudoku

		7	8	6		3		5
2		5	4					1
	9							
6		2			3			
		8				6		
			7			5		2
							1	
4					5	8		9
8		3		9	1	2		

How to play

Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Friday's answer ▶

5	7	6	4	1	3	8	9	2
8	3	9	6	2	5	7	4	1
1	4	2	8	7	9	3	6	5
2	6	5	3	9	8	1	7	4
4	8	7	1	5	2	9	3	6
9	1	3	7	4	6	2	5	8
3	9	4	5	8	1	6	2	7
7	2	8	9	6	4	5	1	3
6	5	1	2	3	7	4	8	9

Send a KISS

You can now post your kiss, and read even more kisses, online at metronews.ca/kiss.

My amazing, young n tall Prince Charming
My only love, my darling, true, sincere and strong love can move mountains! You have to trust and believe in yourself and follow your heart...and everything else will be taken care of by itself. Don't worry about me, I will wait for you as long as you want me to! You are always in my thoughts and dreams, with all my love and kisses...
FROM YOURS FOREVER, SHORT, PATIENT PRINCESS...

M74
I wanted to thank you for your love, beauty, and inspiration. That's all. Big, big love for everyone who's reading this as well! I wish everyone much happiness and wholesome lives for now and for the future. <3
FROM MILKY WAY GALAXY

Today
6°/2°
Partly sunny
Tuesday
6°/1°
Showers
40%
Know what the weather will be 14 days from now.
Check the 14 day trend.
©The Weather Network 2011

Today's horoscope

♈ **Aries** March 21-April 20 Misunderstandings could be expensive, so make sure those you work and do business with know what you are up to today.

♉ **Taurus** April 21-May 21 Take life at a more measured pace over the next 24 hours.

♊ **Gemini** May 22-June 21 Opportunities to prosper are all around, but you must be selective.

♋ **Cancer** June 22-July 22 You seem to be a bit touchy at the moment, and that's bad news for anyone who gets on your wrong side.

♌ **Leo** July 23-Aug.23 You can sense that something big is about to happen but you can't work out what it might be. Relax.

♍ **Virgo** Aug. 24- Sept. 22 Why are you trying so hard to convince people that your ideas are best?

♎ **Libra** Sept. 23-Oct. 23 What seems like a setback today will turn out to be a blessing in disguise before the end of the year, so don't waste time worrying about it.

♏ **Scorpio** Oct. 24-Nov. 22 You will face some tough obstacles today, but being a Scorpio you will enjoy the challenge.

♐ **Sagittarius** Nov. 23-Dec. 21 Your options may be limited at the moment but that's no bad thing.

♑ **Capricorn** Dec. 22-Jan. 20 You will have to use up a lot of physical and mental energy to enjoy what is really quite a modest return. In which case, why bother?

♒ **Aquarius** Jan. 21-Feb. 18 There are two ways you can get what you want: you can go it alone or you can partner up with people who share your ambitions. It's a no-brainer really.

♓ **Pisces** Feb. 19-March 20. Keep your mind focused on a particular target.

SALLY BROMPTON

CHRIS O'MEARA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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MARK HUMPHREY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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